

doing. That is why there is an \$85 trillion unfunded liability on Medicare. That is why there are over \$100 trillion in unfunded liabilities when it comes to Medicare, Social Security, Medicaid, and SCHIP that we will never be able to take care of, which we will shove over onto our kids and grandkids. But trust us, we can get it right this time.

We can create 88 new programs—that is what is in this—new bureaucracies, new government programs, with 150,000 new employees. And if you think that 150,000 employees won't stand between you and your provider, you have another thought coming. They are going to write rules and regulations that will cripple the ability for you to make decisions about your health care in your family. It is going to slow your access to health care and raise your cost of health care.

There are ways to get out of this. There are ways to lower the costs. There are ways to not grow the government and make more health care available to hundreds of thousands and millions of American citizens. The first health care bill introduced was the Patients Choice Act, filed in this Congress by myself and RICHARD BURR. It saves money rather than costing money. It saves \$70 billion in the first 10 years. It saves the States \$1 trillion in the first 10 years. It is the opposite of what we have coming. It is a patient-centered plan rather than a government-centered plan. It puts patients in charge rather than government bureaucrats and Senators. The last thing I want to happen to my patients and me—I am 61 years old, and it will not be long before I am eligible for Medicare—is somebody in Washington making a decision about what my family and I can get. And whether I can afford it is up to me. But what I can get, and where I can get it, ought to be totally and 100 percent left in my hands as an individual who is free in this country.

I have one final point. In this bill is a mandate that you have to buy insurance. You have to buy insurance. If you own your own home, you don't have to buy homeowners insurance. If you don't want to have general liability on your property, you don't have to do it. If you choose not to drive a car, you don't have to buy auto insurance. By the way, 25 percent of the people who own a car don't buy it or they buy it and they cancel it. We know that. That was the latest statistic. So we are going to tell everybody in America that you no longer have the freedom to make a choice, that if you have the assets and you choose not to buy health insurance, you are going to get a fine—a misdemeanor—from the Federal Government. We are going to take away your freedom to make a decision you think is in your best interest.

I note that I have a limited amount of time. With that, I call on the American public to pay very close attention not to what we say and are going to do in the next few weeks in Washington but look at what we have done in the

past. I don't think you can trust us with health care the way we are going. We have not demonstrated we can do that. The person to trust on health care is you. We can fix what is wrong without bringing another 20 percent of health care into the Federal Government and shackling our children forever.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION EXTENSION ACT OF 2009—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 3548, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to H.R. 3548, a bill to amend the Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2008 to provide for the temporary availability of certain additional emergency unemployment compensation, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I have come to talk specifically about the urgency of passing the unemployment benefit extension.

I want to take a moment to respond to my friend from Oklahoma, who was essentially bashing the Government's ability to provide any kind of structure or opportunity for health care, saying that the Federal Government cannot be trusted to provide access to health care for people. I suggest that the 40 million people who receive their health care through Medicare—seniors over age 65 and people with disabilities—would probably disagree with that. I think my 83-year-old mother would wrestle me to the ground if I tried to take away her Medicare card. She has access to choose her own doctor and procedures.

This is a system that involves the public and private sectors, and it was in fact established in 1965 by the U.S. Government to make sure seniors and people with disability have health care. Also, those who are poor in this country and have lost their jobs and are fearful of losing their health care, families, and low-income seniors who need to go into nursing homes would probably disagree with my friends from Oklahoma about Medicaid, even though there are many challenges that we need to work on in terms of rates and so on.

Medicaid is a safety net for many Americans. That is the difference, in some cases, for seniors in nursing homes between life and death.

I am proud the Federal Government also stepped up on Medicaid. I also

think the Children's Health Insurance Program, which was started in the nineties for low-income working families to make sure that if someone is working in a job and does not have health insurance, at least their children can be taken care of with a low-cost policy they pay for. But we established and created a way for families to get health insurance. I think those folks would probably disagree with the statement as well.

In many regards, the VA—and while there are certainly challenges and issues and we all push through to make sure our constituents are served—has been in the forefront of health information technology, electronic medical records, and so on. The VA is a system that works for our veterans as it should. When it is not well funded, as it has not been in the past with the previous administration, we stepped up to increase the funding repeatedly to make sure our veterans have what they need through a Federal Government health care system.

Finally, I will just say, there are our military and military retirees as well whom, I am proud to say, our country has supported through providing a health care system.

We can talk more about health care at another time. But I do think this ongoing effort to be critical of anything we do collectively as a country, through a democratic process of government, that somehow that is bad, I find that interesting, when we are saying to those around the world they should go to our system. We, together through our system, have made sure there are opportunities for many Americans, most Americans, if you count the employer-based health care system, the tax credits, the incentives for employers, the government policy. In some way, our government has been involved in incentivizing health care. The question now is, Do we complete the job? I am very hopeful we will complete the job for every American and tackle health care costs that are crippling our businesses, our government, and our families.

I wish to speak about something else that is of tremendous urgency for families. I was very pleased that last night, finally, after 3 weeks of blocking our ability to get to this bill to extend unemployment benefits, we have the opportunity to get to a vote. Eighty-seven Members voted to proceed to the bill. I don't understand, when 87 Members vote to proceed to the bill, why we could not have done this sooner.

Since we started to try to get to this bill, to this point today, 143,000-plus people have lost their unemployment insurance benefits—just in the last 3 weeks, over 143,000 people, who have done nothing but work all their lives, play by the rules, the job goes away, they are trying to find another job and, in the meantime, keep a roof over the head for their family, food on the table, turn on that electric, turn on that heating system, which is going to cost